

VZCZCXRO9625

RR RUEHAP RUEHFL RUEHGI RUEHGR RUEHKN RUEHKR RUEHMA RUEHMJ RUEHMR  
RUEHPA RUEHPB RUEHQU RUEHRN RUEHSK RUEHSL  
DE RUEHFR #1483/01 3090836  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 050836Z NOV 09  
FM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS FR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC  
INFO RUCNSCO/UNESCO COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS FR 001483

SIPDIS

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [SCUL](#) [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: UNESCO'S 35TH GENERAL CONFERENCE: COMMUNICATIONS AND  
INFORMATION COMMISSION

11. Summary: The Communication and Information (CI) Commission, chaired by Venezuela, met from October 13-15. The agenda included close to 40 draft amendments to the budget and program, almost half of them from Cuba and Egypt. The proposed amendments with the most potential for damage, such as ones mandating that media be "socially responsible to the state," were not adopted. While the overall tenor of the meeting was civil, a clear divide could be seen between the "north" and "south," especially concerning access to information and media freedom. End summary.

#### THE GENERAL DEBATE

12. The CI Commission met five times during the 35th General Conference. It was chaired by Ivan Avila-Belloso, Minister Counselor of the Venezuelan Permanent Delegation to UNESCO. During the general debate on the Director General's draft budget and program for 2010-2011, Slovakia, China, and Russia all stated that the Main Lines of Action and priorities set forth were too general. China, Portugal, Turkey and others called for more work to be done in the area of internet governance, while the Nordic states called for greater cooperation toward the protection of journalists in areas of conflict. The majority of delegations who took the floor encouraged the Director General to expand support for the Information for All Program (IFAP), while several developing countries focused on the value of the Memory of the World Program.

13. The Cuban delegation called on UNESCO to improve the unequal North-South situation in the area of the digital divide. They reflected on financing of the press and ownership of communication media, citing imperial domination and monopolistic power.

14. Some 50 delegations in total gave interventions during the debate, including the United States, which announced support for the draft budget and priorities, citing the International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC) in particular as a valuable program to which we contribute voluntarily.

15. Reacting to the interventions, ADG Khan reiterated that IFAP participation and funding remain extremely low. Without contributions, he said there's not much UNESCO can do to expand the program. He concluded his comments with a plea for more extra-budgetary resources for this program. (Note: We are well aware that the CI sector shares our dislike of this program, which duplicates much of the work already carried out by the sector. However, the program has considerable support from developing nations. End note.)

#### DRAFT AMENDMENTS PROVOKE NO REAL SPARKS

16. The Commission then moved to consideration of the nearly 40 draft proposals for amendments to the budget and program, more than any other commission during this General Conference. Cuba alone submitted ten of them, many of which were barely relevant to the items they meant to amend, several of which seemed merely meant to spark debate on the digital divide and North-South inequality matters, and none of which received full support of the Director General. No heated debate ever materialized on these items and Germany, the Nordic countries, the Baltic countries and Canada were helpful in having them either withdrawn or watered-down to

insignificant amendments.

¶17. Egypt, perhaps prompted by their wish to have Farouk Hosni elected as UNESCO's Director General, had also submitted several vague proposals for programming in the Arab region that would have called for regular program funds. Perhaps as a result of Hosni's defeat, Egypt withdrew or amended all of these to call for extra-budgetary funds to be used.

¶18. Sixteen delegations from all regional groups co-sponsored a proposal calling for IFAP "in particular" to be emphasized in the sector's programming. The United States intervened, seconded by the UK, Norway, Barbados, and St. Lucia, citing both the Assistant Director General's and the Chair's comments that IFAP is struggling financial and lacking in human resources as well. Despite these efforts, the proposal was adopted. In total, the Commission adopted the allocation of just over \$33 million for the Communication and Information sector's activity and staff costs.

#### WSIS FOLLOW-UP

¶19. For the agenda item concerning the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the United States co-sponsored a draft resolution submitted by Norway and eight other countries focusing on open access to scientific information. The resolution calls for UNESCO to "undertake a mapping of existing Open Access initiatives and Open Access stakeholders at the regional and global levels" and to "develop a draft strategy on how UNESCO may strengthen its contribution to the promotion of Open Access to scientific information and research, to be submitted to the 186th session of the Executive Board for approval."

¶10. On the same WSIS item, another draft resolution led to the most

PARIS 00001483 002 OF 002

heated debate of the Commission's session. A last-minute amendment proposed by Cuba which would have made mention of inequalities between the North and the South in terms of "access to knowledge" was quickly gavelled through by the Venezuelan chair before the translation was completed. The Latvian and German delegates were quick to raise a point of order, and enough opposition was raised to several procedural irregularities, including the unwillingness of the Secretariat to use the projection screen in the room to display the text, that the Chair was forced to adjourn the consideration of the text until the next session. At that time, the Cuban language was amended to acceptable levels. The adopted resolution "notes with concern the continued imbalances and inequalities in the field of information and communication, which are being further aggravated by the current world crises, affecting development prospects, particularly those of developing countries."

#### IFLA MANIFESTO

¶11. The final item on the agenda was an uneventful adoption of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' (IFLA) Multicultural Library Manifesto, meant as guidelines and recommendations for national-level programming and policy on the establishment of multilingual and multicultural libraries.

¶12. In addition to these agenda items and draft resolution, the Commission also noted 2008-2009 reports by the Intergovernmental Councils for IFAP and IPDC.

KILLION